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For Immediate Release: February 28, 2002

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Weldon Charges Senate with Misinformation on Cloning

Begins Public Tally of Cloning Science "Myths" and "Misinformation" Promoted By Some Senators

Washington, DC - Today, Congressman Dave Weldon, M.D., wrote to Senator Patrick J. Leahy, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, condemning statements put forth during a human cloning hearing held earlier this month. Rep. Weldon— a former Army Medical Corps physician with a background of experience in molecular genetics research and a current medical internist —who authored the human cloning ban, which passed through the House of Representatives last year with over a 100-vote margin, testified during that

"I'm more than a little concerned about the disregard of fact that is surfacing in this cloning debate over in the other body. Either some Senators are not up-to-speed on this issue or they are just deliberately misleading the public," said Weldon.

"The Senate hearing was factually wrong on at least two counts," said Rep. Weldon. "The first was a study cited as evidence that 'therapeutic cloning' cured rats, when in fact it did not involve the cloning process at all. Another study cited did not use cloned embryonic stem cells as purported, but fetal cells from a cloned cow—an utterly important distinction. This second study would suggest an acceptance of growing cloned human babies to a certain stage in utero and then killing them and taking their organs and cells. Are Senator Feinstein and other proponents of 'therapeutic cloning' actually suggesting this practice? They would have to if they embrace the conclusion of this study."

"Both of these misrepresentations should be embarrassing to the Senate and I would hope that the Chairman would be anxious to set the record straight," concluded Weldon. "Otherwise, I would have to conclude that these cloning hearings are more about propagating misinformation and deceptive statements than they are about facts.'

In his letter to Chairman Leahy, Congressman Weldon specifically addresses these two erroneous statements in an exchange between Senator Diane Feinstein and Dr. Irving Weissman. The first involved a reference by Dr. Weissman to a scientific study, which left Senators with the distinct impression that "therapeutic cloning" had been used successfully to repair spinal cord injury in mice. The study did not involve the use of cloned mice stem cells.

The second erroneous statement referred to the research on generating insulin-producing cells in culture. In his letter, Congressman Weldon points out that the above-mentioned research did not involve therapeutic cloning, but rather embryo stem cell research which the Brownback bill (S. 1899) does not ban.

Congressman Weldon has begun a "Stop Cloning Around" page on his website that will highlight and correct the cloning myths created during this important debate.

> To view "Stop Cloning Around" please go to http://www.house.gov/weldon/ For a copy of the letter sent to Senator Patrick Leahy please call Pamela Groover at 202-225-367 or go to the above cited website.